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Testimony in Opposition to Senate Bills 616, 617, & 618

Senator Kuipers and the Members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Chris Chiles, and I am a graduating student at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. I also represent Students for Sensible Drug Policy, which is a grassroots organization devoted to education and political activism around the topic of drug policy reform.

Senate Bills 616, 617, and 618 are worthy of quality discussion, as they attempt to regulate the new industry of medical marihuana. I believe that providing regulations is a worthy endeavor, and it is indeed the job of state legislators to play that role in this emerging industry.

With that being said, I'd like to stress that these bills do not appropriately address the manufacture or distribution of medical marihuana. Furthermore, these bills have the potential to completely undermine the work of the medical marihuana initiative and the voice of Michigan voters. The restriction of distribution through pharmacies is unrealistic, as these businesses operate on licenses provided by the federal government. Since marihuana is a schedule 1 substance under federal law, pharmacies simply will not play the role of distribution that you have assigned for them.

Also, manufacture of medical marihuana must not be limited to large-scale grow facilities. This could inhibit the quality of medicine, as well as affordability for patients. The Michigan Medical Marihuana Act was crafted in a way to produce small-scale operations. This allows for new individuals to get involved in entrepreneurship, while keeping profit-incentives at a reasonable level. Larger-scale operations should be allowed and regulated but should not replace the system of manufacture created by the Michigan Medical Marihuana Act.

It is clear that some aspects of our current law can use improvement. The topic of dispensaries should certainly be addressed because some patients really do not have good access to this medicine. But these bills are not the way to go. It is imperative that we develop a workable model of distribution that does not involve rescheduling, until those changes have been made on the federal level.

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